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Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
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Item 4 of the provisional agenda*
Organizational and procedural matters

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Note by the Secretariat

1. The proposals set out in the present note have been prepared on the basis of General Assembly resolution A/64/236, entitled "Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development".

I. Organizational and procedural matters

Draft provisional rules of procedure of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

2. The draft provisional rules of procedure of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development are contained in a note by the Secretariat (A/CONF.216/PC/4).

II. Logistics and support

3. Four concrete types of supporting activities are envisaged under resolution 64/236: documentation; inter-agency coordination; organization of work of the Preparatory Committee and fund-raising.

Documentation

4. Documentation required for the meetings of the Preparatory Committee and other related events, including the Conference itself, will be prepared in accordance with the decisions made during the first meeting of the Committee. Therefore, the

* A/CONF.216/PC/1.

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Committee may take this opportunity to identify various reports, together with their timelines, which are needed to support the deliberations of the Committee at its future meetings and other related events.

5. The list of documents may include the reports requested of the Secretary-General on comprehensive analysis of the issues, as identified in resolution 64/236, and updates concerning preparations for the Conference. It may also include the reports requested of the regional commissions and other relevant regional bodies, Governments, major groups and other stakeholders. In addition, the Preparatory Committee may request the Secretary-General to include in his report to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session the decisions reached at the first meeting of the Committee, including analysis of additional issues, as identified during the meeting.

6. In preparing the documentation, the Secretariat will draw upon the expertise and analytical capacities available within the United Nations system and will seek contributions from Governments and other stakeholders, such as the major groups, policy research institutions and global networks that work on sustainable development issues.

Inter-agency coordination

7. The Secretariat, as requested by the General Assembly in resolution 64/236, will use the existing inter-agency coordination mechanisms within the United Nations system and those with other relevant international and regional organizations to seek their input and contributions to the preparatory process based on their respective mandates and comparative advantage. In addition, the Secretariat will actively seek the engagement of other relevant stakeholders, especially major groups, to secure their coordinated contributions to the preparatory process, while avoiding duplication and creating complementarities.

Meetings of the Preparatory Committee

8. Three meetings of the Preparatory Committee are envisaged under resolution 64/236. The Committee may consider taking up the following tasks/activities at its first meeting:

(a) Elect the 10-member Bureau to steer the preparatory process that leads up to the Conference;

(b) Discuss the report of the Secretary-General on progress to date and remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits in the area of sustainable development, together with an analysis of the proposed themes. The analysis presented in the report encompasses input from the United Nations system and benefits from the valuable contributions made by other stakeholders;

(c) Undertake in-depth discussions on substantive, technical and procedural issues to refine and streamline the focus of the preparatory process, taking into account all ongoing intergovernmental processes and major events, such as the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals in September 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity, 2010, the International Year of Forests, 2011, as well as the Five-Year Review of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in September 2010, together with meetings of the Governing Council of the United

Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Conference of the Parties to the three Rio conventions.

(d) Review the rules of procedure of the Conference and recommend their adoption by the General Assembly;

(e) Encourage the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee to play an active role in the intergovernmental preparations for the Conference and to mobilize political support at the highest possible level in both developed and developing countries;

(f) Agree on (i) the exact dates and venue of the conference, (ii) a schedule of Bureau meetings, at least between the first and the second meetings of the Preparatory Committee and (iii) technical and organizational tasks to be completed prior to the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee;

(g) Other matters, as called for by the Committee and the Bureau.

9. The second meeting of the Preparatory Committee is scheduled to be held for two days in March 2011 immediately after the conclusion of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting of the nineteenth session of the Conference on Sustainable Development. In addition to discussing further the substantive themes of the Conference, it is expected that decisions on the following matters will be made at the second meeting:

(a) Modalities and schedule of negotiations as well as the introduction of the Chair's text that will form the basis for the outcome document of the Conference;

(b) Organization of work of the Conference, including the high-level segment, round tables and multi-stakeholder dialogues;

(c) Structure and scope of input and documentation to be sought from international, regional and national preparatory processes;

(d) Themes and hosts of global and regional high-level round tables and intersessional meetings to be organized in support of the preparations for the Conference;

(e) Activities to be completed prior to the third meeting of the Preparatory Committee, including the schedule of Bureau meetings between the second and third meetings of the Committee.

10. Given that the General Assembly, in resolution 64/236, envisages the final meeting of the Preparatory Committee to be held in 2012 immediately preceding the Conference, the Committee may consider examining arrangements for finalizing the Chair's text (completing negotiations) between the two meetings. The Committee may also discuss the contents and structure of the focused political document to be produced as an outcome of the Conference.

11. Most likely, the third meeting of the Preparatory Committee will be devoted mainly to negotiations on the Chair's text in order to reach consensus on the focused political document. There may also be some pending procedural and organizational issues which would require the Committee's attention. Bearing this in mind, the Committee may wish to discuss whether the time allocated for the third meeting will suffice.

Fund-raising

12. The General Assembly, in resolution 64/236, recognizes that availability of adequate financing would be critical to ensure the effective participation and involvement of developing countries as well as of major groups in the preparatory process, including the organization of national and regional meetings, and the Conference itself. Predictable funding, among other things, will certainly be an important factor in ensuring the success of the preparatory process and the Conference. Therefore, international and bilateral donors, including other countries, are encouraged to support the preparations for the Conference through voluntary contributions to the trust fund of the Conference on Sustainable Development.

III. Preparatory activities

13. A successful Conference will require the active participation of all stakeholders involved in implementing sustainable development at all levels. The Preparatory Process therefore needs to take into account all intergovernmental and other relevant processes as well as trends and gaps in the implementation of the commitments undertaken in the area of sustainable development.

National processes

14. Countries are encouraged to consider forming national preparatory committees, with the participation of all relevant parts of Government and stakeholders, including local communities and major groups, to undertake assessments of critical challenges to the implementation of sustainable development, especially with regard to the themes identified in resolution 64/236. The assessments need to cover the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and to identify new and emerging challenges. This process will enable the Secretariat to produce updated country profiles, thus contributing to a better understanding of what works and does not in implementing policies and programmes related to sustainable development. Such an analysis will also be very useful in the preparation of the final outcome document. The national preparatory committees may also be tasked with launching the public awareness campaigns to mobilize technical input and political support for the Conference by organizing multi-stakeholder dialogues on the future of sustainable development. In implementing such activities, the countries may wish to draw upon the expertise and assistance of the United Nations system through the United Nations Resident Coordinator system.

Regional processes

15. Regional preparations will take place during 2011 and 2012. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is initiating discussions with the regional commissions, the UNEP regional offices, the United Nations Development Programme and other institutions at the regional level about their taking the lead in organizing the preparatory activities at the regional level.

16. Resolution 64/236 lays down that regional implementation meetings scheduled to be organized under the auspices of the Conference on Sustainable Development will become regional preparatory meetings for the Conference. In this regard, the Preparatory Committee may reiterate the importance of high-level participation at

the regional meetings which will be devoted to undertaking regional reviews and assessments of progress made in sustainable development, and identifying regional trends as well as key policy issues, priorities and follow-up actions. Consideration should be given, where appropriate, to the organization of subregional preparatory meetings, as well as the organization of high-level round tables and multi-stakeholder dialogues on thematic areas to be covered by the Conference. The Secretariat will work closely with the regional commissions in developing a common format for the regional preparations to promote greater comparability of reviews and assessments undertaken, while at the same time allowing originality and specificity of regional contributions.

Major groups

17. A transparent, dynamic and interactive preparatory process calls for notable contributions from and active participation of major groups. Accordingly, major groups are encouraged to contribute actively to the proceedings of the multi-stakeholder dialogues and related events that will be organized as part of the preparatory process. The Secretariat will work closely with the major groups to ensure their participation in the events planned for the Conference. To this end, the Preparatory Committee may invite donors and international organizations to support, either directly or through the Commission's trust fund, the participation of major groups in the events.

Expert inputs

18. The conventional approach to mobilizing expert input is through workshops, expert meetings and technical briefings, which will be organized jointly or separately by different United Nations entities within the context of Conference themes and their respective mandates. To complement this process, the Secretariat will mobilize a number of expert teams to provide comprehensive analysis of (i) progress made in achieving sustainable development and remaining gaps, (ii) new and emerging challenges, (iii) green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and (iv) the institutional framework for sustainable development. The Secretariat will further complement this process by setting up thematic blogs to seek the input and contributions of experts, major groups and other stakeholders who may wish to contribute to the preparatory process. It will also solicit video recordings of talks by and interviews with leading experts on various themes or topics in sustainable development for broadcasting on its website.

Outreach and dissemination

19. To increase and maintain the awareness of stakeholders about the Conference and its preparatory process, a dynamic and flexible advocacy campaign will be launched. It will incorporate multiple media and forms of communication, and will tailor communications to key target constituencies so as to meet their information requirements. Work on the establishment of a Conference website has been initiated. The website will be used to keep the world informed about the preparatory process, to raise awareness about different aspects of the Conference, including its expected outcomes, to promote the events that will take place as part of the preparatory process and to seek input from stakeholders to the preparatory process, including substantive issues to be addressed at the Conference. The United Nations system

will mobilize its communications offices around the world to reach out to all stakeholders in order to mobilize support for the Conference.

IV. Coordination with the host country

20. Immediately after the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee, the United Nations will start preparing a host country agreement which will serve as the basis for discussions with the Government of Brazil. The agreement will specify the place and date of the Conference, participation, premises, equipment, utilities and supplies, medical facilities, accommodation, transport, police protection, local personnel, financial arrangements, liability, privileges and immunities, import duties and taxes, and settlement of disputes.

21. The United Nations will encourage the Government of Brazil to designate a counterpart team that would be vested with the responsibility of ensuring that the obligations of the Government, as agreed in the host country agreement, are met in a timely and efficient manner. The Secretariat would regularly consult with the team and share necessary information about the state of preparatory arrangements.